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Anecdotes,
HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED,
OF THE
PRIVATE LIFE
OF
PETER THE GREAT.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Anecdotes are given on the authority of Monsieur Stehling, who, in 1784, was a member of the Council of State to the Empress Catherine, and who had collected them from ocular or auricular witnesses, contemporaries of Peter the First, and had carefully subjoined at the bottom of each anecdote the name of the person from whom it had been derived, and who had guaranteed its authenticity. Monsieur Stehling's manuscript having been perused by François-Louis

ADVERTISEMENT.

Comte d'Escherny, Chamberlain to the King of Wirtemberg, the contents of it were, subsequently, and from memory, committed to writing by that gentleman, and published in his work, printed at Paris in 1811, and which is entitled, "*Melanges de Littérature, d'Histoire, de Morale, de Philosophie;*" &c. Those who would examine the original of the ensuing translation, will find it in the First Volume of the *Melanges*, but they are warned that the incidents alone have been extracted without any attention to the reflections with which the Count d'Escherny has interspersed his narrative.

ANECDOTES
OF
PETER THE GREAT.

FIRST ANECDOTE.

THE Czar Alexis Michailowistch was a widower; mild and affable in his manners, he lived in habits of familiarity with his nobles, and sometimes went without ceremony to dine with them. Happening, one day, to be at the house of a nobleman of the name of Matweof, he saw the cloth laid, and said to him, "Matweof, I will dine with you to-day, but upon

condition that no one shall be displaced on my account.” Shortly after, the wife of Matweof, a young man, and a young girl, entered the room, and seated themselves at the table. The Czar said little, and ate much, but looked still more at the young girl, with whom he was not acquainted. After dinner the following conversation took place.—“ Matweof, I knew your wife, I had seen your son, but I did not know you had a daughter ; you never mentioned her to me.”—“ It is because, sire, the young person whom you have seen is not my daughter ; she is the daughter of one of my friends.”—“ She is very pretty, and appears also very amiable.”—“ I can assure your

majesty that she is still more amiable than handsome; her temper is excellent; she is gentle, modest, and industrious.”—“We must endeavour, Matweof, to marry her well; with her beauty, and such a character as you have given her, she deserves to have a good husband.”—“I am endeavouring to find one for her, sire, but it is not an easy thing, for fortune is, in these times, an indispensable requisite, and she has none.”—“I will myself think of a suitable match for her; do you, also, look out for one, and in a few days, we will see each other again.”

The Czar went away, leaving Matweof enchanted with his good nature

and benevolence. Soon after, the Czar again saw Matweof, and said to him : “ Well ! have you succeeded in finding a match for your pretty ward ? ” — “ Sire, I have thought of one or two that might suit her, but hitherto I have had no opportunity of making a direct proposal on her account, and, besides, I fear, as I have already told your majesty, that her want of fortune will be an obstacle.” — “ Then I have made a greater progress in this affair than you, Matweof, for I think I have found a suitable husband for her, and I hope she will not refuse him. He is rich enough for both, good-natured, virtuous, and is provided with a good post.”

Matweof, after pouring forth the

most lively expressions of gratitude, said, “Sire, may I venture to ask your majesty upon whom your choice has fallen?”—“You shall soon know it; in the meantime, conduct me to your fair protégée; I will sound her myself.”

The Czar was introduced to her, and made her some equivocal offers, but without discovering himself. When he had left her, he took Matweof by the hand—“My friend,” said he to him, “I will keep you no longer in suspense, I am more and more charmed with Natalia (for that was her name): the husband whom I design for her is myself.” Matweof immediately threw himself at the feet of his sovereign, and, after acknowledging the high

honour intended for his ward, said to him, “Sire, I have brought up Natalia; she is in some degree related to me, and I rejoice in her good fortune, as much as if she were my own daughter, but as I may be accused of having employed art and seduction to induce your majesty to such an alliance, I beseech you not to make known your intention immediately. Let the most beautiful young women of the empire be assembled, according to custom: Natalia will be admitted into the number: you can then declare your choice; and thus your majesty will obtain your wishes without exposing me to the hatred and jealousy of the nobles and the court.” The Czar approved of

this expedient, and soon after proclaimed his intention of marrying again, and his desire of choosing a wife amongst the daughters of his nobles. Natalia was the object of his choice: he loved her; she returned his affection, and they lived in great harmony. He wished for a woman of simple and modest manners; he found one in Natalia. By her, he had Peter the First. She was called Natalia Kisilowna Narischkin.

SECOND ANECDOTE.

PETER the First, during his childhood, was in great danger of losing, not only his succession to the crown, but his life. The Strelitz revolted; they besieged the palace, and committed the most cruel outrages: they massacred several of the nobles, but those belonging to the party of Peter and the Narischkins were the immediate objects of their vengeance. It is believed that this sedition was caused by the intrigues of the am-

bitious Sophia, sister of Peter. That prince, then a child, was withdrawn from the fury of the Strelitz, and carried to the monastery of the Trinity. The rebels, dispersed in every quarter, endeavoured to find him, in order to take away his life. A party of them went to the monastery, and, entering the church, discovered the young prince, who had taken refuge behind the altar. A Strelitz immediately ran up to him, with a knife in his hand, in order to kill him: the child looked stedfastly at him; already the furious soldier had seized him by the arm, and was about to strike him, when one of his companions called aloud to him, "Stop, stop, do not kill him at the

altar, wait till you get him to another place.” They were proceeding to drag him from it, when they perceived galloping towards them a detachment of the guard on horseback, informed probably of the road which the Strelitz had taken, and of the precious life which they threatened. The Strelitz immediately escaped by another door, and fled. Twenty years after, as Peter the First was at Cronstadt, superintending the equipment of a fleet, he particularly remarked one of the sailors, looked attentively at him, and changed colour. The sailor, seeing that the Czar observed him, approached, and, falling on his knees, said to him, “Sire, I see you have discovered me,

you are not mistaken, I am the wretch who, armed with a knife, was going to strike you; I confess my crime, I deserve to be punished with death.” The Czar asked him several questions. It appeared that after he had fled from the church, he had changed his dress, and his name—had entered into the navy, and from that time had led an honest and reputable life. The Czar was much moved; he granted him his life, and was satisfied with banishing him to one of the extremities of the empire, that he might not again have the chance of encountering the object of such unpleasant recollections. It is imagined that the fright occasioned by this Strelitz at the mo-

nastery of the Trinity, was the cause of the spasms and convulsions to which he was afterwards always subject.

THIRD ANECDOTE.

PETER had already reigned many years, when he was seized, at the age of fifteen, with a disorder which threatened his life. A deputation was sent to him to entreat a pardon for nine criminals, condemned to suffer death, in order that, according to custom, they might pray for the preservation of his life. At this request, the Czar, apparently dying, looked round, and said to the magistrates who had been deputed to him : “ What do you

ask of me? If I, were to grant life to wretches who have trampled under foot all laws, both human and divine, I should myself commit a crime, and should, in my own eyes, be unworthy of again beholding the light of day; on the contrary, I hope to merit the divine mercy by performing an act of justice, and I order you to depart immediately, and cause the sentence of death to be executed against these nine criminals.”

FOURTH ANECDOTE.

THE Czar was in Sweden, besieging Narva: wide breaches had been made in the walls; the ramparts were thrown down: the besieged, pressed on all sides, without hope of succour, still refused to surrender. Peter gave orders for the assault.—Horn, the commander of the place, at last hoisted the white flag, but it was too late:—the Russians, already masters of the ramparts, rushed into the town, and were putting every one to the sword. Blood was flowing

in every quarter. Peter saw, and wished to stop these massacres; he commanded, he threatened, but in vain; he was obliged to fall upon his own soldiers to put a stop to their ferocity; and at last he restored them to order. When Horn, the commander of the place, was brought before him, he went up to him, with his naked sword in his hand, and gave him a box on the ear. “Why, wretch,” said he, “did you hoist your flag so late; was it that your wives and children might be massacred? Look at this sword; it is not with the blood of the Swedes that it is stained, but with that of my own soldiers; you have reduced me to this cruel extremity to save

your life and the lives of your fellow-citizens.”

This Anecdote proves that Peter was humane, that he possessed greatness of mind ; the following will shew his respect for the laws.

FIFTH ANECDOTE.

ONE of the Empress's maids of honour was a Miss Hamilton, young, beautiful, and susceptible. Thanks to our prejudices, honour and pleasure are not, in a young girl, easily compatible with each other. Twice, stifling the feelings of nature, Miss Hamilton had concealed her weakness by destroying the fruits of it. A third innocent victim perished : but she had been suspected and watched ; her crime was clearly proved, and she was

condemned to lose her head. Peter had not seen with impunity so many charms ; he had loved her ; she had made him happy : and Miss Hamilton, in her prison, a prey to the most cruel reflections, might nevertheless hope to escape death, since she could reckon the Czar in the number of her lovers. The day destined for her execution arrived ; she appeared upon the scaffold dressed in a robe of white satin trimmed with black ribbands : never had she looked so beautiful. The monarch approached to take leave of her ; he embraced her, endeavoured to inspire her with courage, and said to her, “ I cannot save you, the law that condemns you is greater than I ; trust

in God, and resign yourself to your fate.” Just at the moment when the Czar, much moved, had pressed her hand for the last time, and was leaving her, a single blow severed her head from her body, and terminated the life of the unfortunate Hamilton.

SIXTH ANECDOTE.

PETER was not always as severe as he had been to Miss Hamilton. One evening, Firmont, the surgeon, who had just been supping with him, killed one of his servants in a fit of anger and intoxication. He came the next day, threw himself at the feet of the Czar, and confessed his crime. Peter granted him his life, and continued to live with him in the same familiarity as before. He enjoined him only to take care of the widow and children of the

deceased, and to pension them, an injunction which Firmont punctually obeyed. Had Peter then more compassion for the weaknesses occasioned by wine, than for those occasioned by love? Did he think the case of Firmont more excusable than that of Miss Hamilton? or was Firmont so useful to him, that he sufficed that consideration to make him forget his respect for the laws? or was it only the effect of one of those inconsistencies too inseparable from the weakness of human nature? These are questions not easily to be decided. The ruling passion of this monarch was an attachment to all the useful arts, especially navigation, building, turn-

ing, and surgery. He was a phlebotomist, drew teeth, tapped for the dropsy, and performed several other surgical operations.

SEVENTH ANECDOTE.

POLBAJAROFF, one of his valets de chambre, being jealous of his wife, and suspecting her of carrying on some intrigues, resolved to revenge himself upon her. He pretended, one day, in presence of the Emperor, to pity her very much, complaining that she was dreadfully afflicted with the toothache. The Czar, who liked nothing better than an opportunity of displaying his skill, said to him, "Come along, lead me to your wife, I will soon cure her :

I will pull out her tooth for her. As soon as the Czar was conducted to her, he made her open her mouth, and asked her which tooth gave her pain ; “None,” answered she.—“Sire,” replied Polbajaroff, “that is her way ; as soon as any one attempts to relieve her by pulling out her tooth, she declares she feels no pain. Look, Sire, there is the bad tooth.” The Czar desired him to hold his wife’s head, took out his pincers, and having forcibly opened her mouth, fitted the instrument on the tooth, and drew it out. Some days afterwards, the Czar was informed that the young woman had not had the toothache ; and that the tooth he had extracted was perfectly

sound; and learning that it was a trick of her husband's, punished him with a severe beating.

EIGHTH ANECDOTE.

PETER was by no means sparing of blows, which he not unfrequently distributed himself. He carried a rope's end always about him, and an ivory headed cane in his hand. With one or the other he chastised, not only his servants, but sometimes even the nobles and grandees of his court.

He behaved now and then something like a woman in Switzerland, mother of a number of children more or less mutinous and unruly. When she was

about to leave home for some days to go into the country, or elsewhere, she used to call them all around her, and then whipped them stoutly one after the other. This operation performed, she said to them, "My children, I shall be absent some days, during which time, I know you will not fail, according to custom, to commit many follies; I have whipped you for them beforehand, for I do not choose to have that disagreeable job to do on my return; it would poison the pleasure I shall feel in seeing you again." Then she made them come to her, embraced them tenderly, and dried their tears with kisses. It is evident this woman was an original; her method naturally

leads me to that of Peter the First, who also was not an ordinary person. When, with his cane or his cord, he had chastised one of his servants, and he discovered the innocence of him whom he had fancied guilty, he ordered him to be brought before him, and said to him, “My friend, I have chastised you unjustly, I allow it, and as a reparation, I promise you that when you commit a fault, you shall be exempted from punishment.”

In this manner he acted one day by a cabin-boy, at Cronstadt. He was on board a yacht, where he had dined, and was taking his usual nap after dinner in the cabin of the vessel. He had given orders that there should be

no noise, and his officers well knew the necessity of not disturbing his slumbers. Some of them, however, being upon deck, and forgetting that the Czar was sleeping under them, or probably having drank too freely, began to divert themselves by playing off some practical jokes upon each other. The Czar was soon awaked by their noisy amusements. They heard him jump from his seat upon the floor, put on his slippers, and prepare to leave his room. They all fled immediately, hiding themselves in every creak and corner, where they were the least likely to be seen by the Czar. He soon came upon deck, armed with his formidable cane, but he could see no

one but a single cabin-boy. Not doubting that this cabin-boy was the author of all the bustle, he gave him fifty smart blows with his cane: the poor boy cried, wept, and protested his innocence; but in vain. As soon as the Czar went away, the officers, who had occasioned the noise, returned, while the cabin-boy continued to weep and to sob—"Will you be quiet!" said they to him. "No," answered he, "I will not be quiet (and he began to cry louder than before). Fine sport you have had with your tricks, and I am to be punished for them; his majesty has belaboured me 'till I can scarcely stand."—"Will you be silent, little wretch! the Czar will hear you."

“ So much the better, I will go and tell him that it was not I, but you who made the noise which awoke him.”

The Czar, who had heard the sound of voices disputing, had approached, and listened to all that passed. He took no notice of it at that time, but an hour after, he sent for the cabin-boy, and said to him, “ I find it is not you who have made all this bustle, although I punished you for it ; but I promise you that the next fault you commit, you shall be let off without being chastised.” Some time after, when the Czar had forgotten all this, the same cabin-boy did something which greatly enraged him, and his cane was already lifted to strike, when the boy,

throwing himself at his feet, called aloud to him, "Pardon me, pardon me, Sire, I am he whom you beat the other day unjustly, for a noise I did not make. Your majesty promised me that I should escape punishment for the next fault I committed; I appeal to your royal word." "True," said the Czar, "I remember it; get ye gone, and take care not to do the same again." He treated his subjects as a father treats his children, attending only to this distinction in the proportion of punishment—that if children require a rod, a stick is necessary for men: in short, when he is administering all these corrections, he appears in the light of a father in the midst of his family, at once

severe and indulgent. Perhaps his manners might not be wholly exempt from roughness and ferocity: his education had been much neglected; the worst profligates had been the companions of his childhood; and he was, besides, naturally subject to violent passions, which he had never been taught to restrain, and which rendered him, at times, absolutely ferocious and dangerous, as may be seen by what happened to him with a young apprentice, a turner.

NINTH ANECDOTE.

It has been said before that he sometimes amused himself with turning, and that he excelled in it. At the Academy of Sciences, at St. Alexander Newski, and at the Church of the Fortress, are to be seen several specimens of turning, worked by his imperial hands. There is nothing very edifying in the sight of an emperor employed in turning, or a king amusing himself in performing the work of a locksmith; it can be of no use to

them in the rank in which they are placed ; let them hunt, if they please ; it is a wholesome exercise, strengthens the body, and fits them for the fatigues and hardships of war, and war is allowable when it is undertaken for the defence and safety of the people. The case, however, of the Czar was very different : he had a nation to form, and to succeed in his purpose, he was obliged, in some degree, to become the first professor in every art, or rather perhaps the first person to give an example of the practice of them in his empire. Considering it in this point of view, we need be no longer shocked to behold him drawing teeth, or performing other surgical operations, and

we may admire him when we see him attending to the building of a ship, joining together the different parts, putting his own hand to the work, and silently preparing those formidable vessels, which were destined, sixty years afterwards, to sail from the Baltic to the Archipelago, and reduce to ashes an Ottoman fleet. But it is time to return to the apprentice.—

The Czar had in his service a very skilful turner; he was at the head of the work-shop in which the Czar used to work, and it was the business of the young apprentice to take off the Czar's cap as soon as he was seated at the turning-box. One day, the boy performed his function rather too hastily,

and in taking off his majesty's cap, pulled his hair very roughly. Peter, being much hurt, turned round in great fury, got up, and, seizing a hanger, pursued the apprentice, who fled with the speed of fear, and, concealing himself under a heap of wood, escaped the anger of the Czar. The next day, his passion being cooled, he enquired for the apprentice, and caused every search to be made, but could not obtain any tidings of him. Several days passed, and no one could tell what was become of him. The Czar, to induce him to return, caused his pardon to be published; but the apprentice had fled so far from Petersburg, that the news never reached him. He was absent ten years,

entered into another profession, and did not return to Petersburg till long after the death of the Czar: he was recognized by his former master, the turner, and settled advantageously. With the exception of these fits of passion, which he could not control, the Czar had naturally a good heart; he was indulgent, humane, and capable of loving and esteeming those, even of his enemies, who merited his regard. Such were his feelings towards Charles the Twelfth, and he shed tears upon receiving the account of his death: it is true that tears are sweet, when they are given to the memory of a formidable enemy who is no more. No one had more compassion than he had for the

weaknesses of humanity; he was particularly and justly indulgent to the frailties of the fair sex, to those frailties which make us happy, and which we treat with so much severity.

TENTH ANECDOTE.

THE following anecdote is a striking proof of this indulgence. He was travelling in Russia, and had stopped to dine in a village. His subjects, who loved him, particularly the common people, always collected round him to see him. They rejoiced in his presence, like children in that of a good father. He was at table, and the room was full of the inhabitants of the village, of both sexes: amongst this crowd, a young female peasant, lovely and fresh

as a rose, had hidden herself behind a door, from whence she advanced timidly, from time to time, and as if by stealth, to look at the Czar. Whenever she shewed her pretty face, the rustic crowd began to laugh and whisper. The Czar, perceiving this, desired the girl to advance, and inform him what was the cause of their mirth. At this question, the laughter redoubled, and at last he was informed, that the young peasant who had concealed herself, was forsaken by all her companions—that she had born a child to a German officer, who had afterwards abandoned her—that from that time her conduct had been irreproachable, and that she was very in-

dustrious. The young girl came forward, with her eyes cast upon the ground, and her face covered with blushes. The Czar encouraged her, took her by the hand, made her relate the history of her amours, and, after embracing and consoling her, gave her a handful of rubles, and ordered all the people of the village to receive her, and treat her as before ; he asked to see the child, who was strong and hearty ; said he would take care of it, and desired that when old enough he should be brought to court. He treated all his subjects, especially the lower classes, with the same good nature, the same delightful simplicity,

so characteristic of the great man,
but not always with the same ge-
nerosity.

ELEVENTH ANECDOTE.

PETER was one day in a boat laden with earthen ware;—the encouragement he endeavoured to give to commerce, made him consider nothing that related to it unworthy his attention. As he was going over the boat, and examining its contents, his foot slipped, and he fell into the midst of the earthen ware, the greatest part of which was broken by his fall; he got up immediately, and declared that he was not hurt: “Yes,” said the merchant,

“ but who will pay me for my earthenware ?” The Czar took out of his pocket a ducat, and gave it to him. This sum may appear a small indemnification from an emperor to a potter.

TWELFTH ANECDOTE.

WHEN any of his people, or his soldiers, to whom he was always accessible, and by whom he was much beloved, had any thing to request of him, or any complaints to make, they applied to him in person*. There was not a soldier married in his regiment of the guards of Preobragenski, (and there was as many as a thousand) who did

* The soldiers of the great Frederick did the same; they called him Fritz, and spoke to him with the utmost freedom.

not ask him without scruple to stand godfather to his first child, which he never refused to do, either himself or by proxy : he also visited the mother, gave her a kiss, and a ruble to the father, but never more ; and this was not avarice on his part, but a wise and prudent economy. There was very little specie at that time in Russia ; ready money was scarce, and he was very careful of it ; he reserved it for the payment of his troops, and the maintenance of the army. He sustained long wars, created a navy, invited over foreign tradesmen and artificers, at a great expense, and, nevertheless, so admirable was the order he had introduced into his finances, that he never

incurred any debts. He liberally rewarded merit, and no one knew better than he did how to recompense those who had rendered services either to himself or to the state, but his manner of recompensing them, proves his genius ; he conferred upon them lands more or less considerable, but such as were neglected or spoiled, and destitute of inhabitants. By these means he restored waste lands to cultivation, and encouraged industry and agriculture, the most solid foundation of the riches and strength of an empire. These lands are now perhaps worth a hundred times more to their possessors, than any pecuniary reward he could then have bestowed.

He had likewise the rare merit of being zealously attached to Christianity, and, at the same time, an enemy to all superstition and fanataticism : nothing is a more convincing proof than this, of the excellence of his natural understanding.

THIRTEENTH ANECDOTE.

WHEN he was in a town of Poland, he heard a great deal of a miraculous image of the Virgin, which shed tears during mass, and he determined to examine closely this celebrated miracle. The image being at some height from the ground, he asked for a ladder, which he mounted; and perceiving, upon examination, two small holes near the eyes of the figure, he put his hand upon the cap, and took off the

wig, together with a part of the skull, whilst some monks, who were at the feet of the ladder, looking quietly at the Czar, and not imagining that he could so soon discover the fraud, trembled upon seeing the head of their miraculous virgin thus dishonoured.—The Czar found within the head a small reservoir of water, the top of which was on a level with the eyes; and which contained some very small fish, whose motion agitating the water, caused it to flow slowly and in small quantities to the holes made in the corners of the eyes. He descended from the ladder without endeavouring to undeceive the de-

votees, or any other person, and, turning to the monks, coolly said to them, "That is a very singular image."

FOURTEENTH ANECDOTE.

THE Russians, dissatisfied at the preference which the Czar shewed for his new city of Petersburg, and having conceived a great aversion for it, fabricated a prophecy, pretending that the rising town would be entirely swallowed up by the sea. To gain credit for this prophecy, a miracle was necessary, and they had recourse to another image of the Virgin, constructed nearly upon the same model as that of Poland, which shed tears for the future

fate of Petersburg. This was not a time to keep the secret; Peter discovered and exposed the imposture.

Though he despised all superstition, he respected and tolerated in his empire every religion, except that of the Jews. Ann, or Elizabeth, upon being requested to admit them into the kingdom, replied, “What would the Jews do in Russia? they would die of hunger:” thus meaning to imply the character the Russians bear for selfishness and cunning.

Peter, who, as it has been before-mentioned, respected all established religions, arrived one Sunday at Dantzic. The gates of the town, which he found shut, were opened to

him, and upon his entrance, not seeing any person in the streets, he enquired the reason, and was informed that every one was at church. The inhabitants were Lutherans ; and the Czar having a curiosity to be present during the Lutheran service, desired to be conducted to the principal church. As soon as he entered it, every person rose up out of respect, and the magistrates prepared to leave their seats and advance to meet him, but he made a sign that the service should not be interrupted, and that every one should remain in his place, and walking immediately up to the first burgomaster, or magistrate, he seated himself beside him. This burgomaster, according to

the custom of the place, had on a large wig. Peter, out of reverence, had taken off his fur cap, which he held in his hand, and feeling his head cold, he turned round, took off the wig of the burgomaster, and put it on his own head, not thinking that this method which he took to preserve himself from the cold, had any thing extraordinary in it. The astonishment of the assembly at the sight of the bald head of the magistrate, and that of Peter muffled up in an enormous wig, may be easily imagined.—The sermon being ended, to which Peter listened with great attention, he rose to go away, and taking the wig off his head,

returned it to the burgomaster, thanking him for it in the most obliging manner. There was no affectation in this action; he did not imagine it would be even noticed, and was quite unconscious of the astonishment it occasioned at Dantzic, as he was in the habit of acting in the same manner by Menzicoff, whose wig he took off whenever he wanted to make use of it, for as he had little hair, he was very susceptible of cold.

His toleration extended even to the superstitious and fanatical Greek schismatics, called the Roskoltschi, or old believers, whom he was satisfied with distinguishing by a mark,

which was a piece of red and yellow cloth, fastened to the back, and which did not make martyrs of them, as persecution would have done.

FIFTEENTH ANECDOTE.

PETER has been unjustly accused of entertaining an undue partiality for foreigners: but what could he have done without them? It was by their assistance alone, their industry, their skill in naval and military affairs, in commerce, mechanics, medicine, and surgery, that he could hope to instruct and enlighten his people, and for this reason, and not out of any contempt for his own nation, he encouraged and protected them, as is evident from

the desire he shewed to dispense with them as soon as possible. When he was at Warsaw, he frequently visited a lady, whose turn of mind and conversation pleased him very much, and whom he consulted upon his designs, his political affairs, and his efforts and labours to form and polish his subjects. One day, just after he had defeated Charles the Twelfth at Pultowa, he told her he thought himself in such a situation as no longer to stand in need of foreigners, and declared his intention of not admitting them again into his armies. The lady endeavoured to prove to him that he was wrong, and, though Peter supported his opinion with some warmth, she refused to yield, and the

Czar left her with evident marks of displeasure. The Countess, who sometimes had concerts performed before Peter, by a set of musicians belonging to her chapel, invited him, a short time after this altercation, to dinner, during which several pieces of music, which he used to admire, were played. Peter listened to them without applauding, or appearing to take any pleasure in the performance; and upon his friend's testifying her surprise at this, said to her, "I do not know what ails your musicians to-day, but they play so ill, that I can scarcely recognize this music."—"Do you think so, Sire? My band is usually composed of foreign, as well as Polish

musicians: but, to-day, there may possibly be only the latter, indeed I am sure that is the case; come, I see foreigners cannot yet be dispensed with in my concerts; another time, Sire, they shall be admitted.” Peter perfectly understood the instructive lesson this little artifice was intended to convey; and, profiting by it, he gave up the idea of banishing foreigners from his armies.

The necessity of foreigners is felt to this day in Russia, and under them, the Russian soldiers, who are esteemed some of the best in the world, fight with more confidence, especially under the Germans, of whom there are great numbers amongst their troops.

In the last war but one against the Turks, at the siege of Bender, one Baron de Stein, a German volunteer, who had greatly distinguished himself by his bravery, and was idolized by the Russian soldiers, was the first to mount the breach, where he received two cuts from a sabre, of which he died in the course of a few hours. Though mortally wounded, he refused to retire, and, supported by two Russian soldiers, remained upon the breach until the enemy was driven from it, and the town taken. The same soldiers, assisted by two others, then carried him down the ladder, and, exhibiting every mark of grief, bore him, with the most affectionate zeal

to his tent, where he shortly after expired.

Although Peter was unpolished himself, he liked the society of ladies, who, when they possessed any merit, had great influence over him, and one of the most efficacious remedies, which could be administered to him for those convulsions or spasms, to which he was liable, was the sight of a beautiful woman, whose presence alone calmed and relieved him.

His constant and tender attachment for Catherine Skavronski, is well known. He was cruel towards his son, whom he caused to be condemned to death by the sentence of a tribunal, which he had himself dictated; but it

must be remembered that this son hated his father, and all his innovations, was entirely governed by men attached to ancient customs and antient barbarism, by ecclesiastics who were the declared enemies of all the improvements of Peter, and that consequently the monarch had no choice left but to put him to death, or submit to the total destruction of the fruits of all his own labours, which his son would have infallibly occasioned upon his ascension to the throne. This action of Peter's deserves to be compared to that of Brutus, who sacrificed his sons for the good of his country.

SIXTEENTH ANECDOTE.

AFTER this tragical event, Peter had by Catherine another son, whose name was Petrowitch, and in whom, as his sole remaining heir, all his hopes were centered. At the age of a year and a half, he lost him, and, unable to support this severe calamity, he fell into a deep melancholy, neglected his affairs and the care of his empire, and strictly prohibiting every one from approaching him, shut himself up in his apartment, and gave way to his grief.

Catherine, who had to sustain her own affliction as well as that of the Czar, terrified at the condition in which he had already continued some days, and not daring herself to interrupt his retirement, applied to the senator, Dolgorouki, a man of weight, talents, and integrity, attached to the Czar and to his country, and who had, deservedly, great influence over the mind of that prince. Dolgorouki readily promised to leave nothing untried which might induce the Czar to abandon his grief and his solitude; and, assembling the senate, he caused them to follow him to the door of the Czar's apartment. After knocking loudly several times without receiving any answer, he called

the Emperor by his name, uttering, at the same time, exclamations of terror, which at length alarmed the Czar, who approached, and, demanding what man durst disobey the orders he had given to be left alone, was answered by the intrepid senator, that the empire would be lost unless he appeared, that, for want of his presence, the most important matters were suspended, and that, if he did not himself resume the direction of public affairs, they should be under the necessity of electing a new sovereign, since the government could not be carried on without a head. The Czar, struck with the firmness of Dolgorouki, and astonished at so unusual a

language, yielded to persuasion, and, quitting his retreat, immediately followed him to the senate, where the multiplicity of public affairs and the cares of government, soon made him forget his grief and his loss.

SEVENTEENTH ANECDOTE.

ANOTHER anecdote is recorded of Dolgorouki, which, no less than the former, shews his firmness, heroism, and zeal for the public good.—Peter, in full senate, having deliberated upon the best means to be adopted for digging the canal of Ladoga, resolved to employ for that purpose the peasants of Petersburgh and Novogorod, and caused an order to be drawn up to that effect. Dolgorouki, who was not present at the time this law was

passed, arrived a few days after at the senate, from which Peter happened then to be absent, and being informed of what had been done, took the order in his hand, and, after reading it with great indignation, tore it in pieces, and trampled it under his feet. The astonished senators crowded immediately round him, saying, “What have you done, Dolgorouki? you are ruined. What will the Czar say when he finds you have destroyed the law, which he has himself drawn up, and of which he is the more tenacious as he considers it the only means of effecting the project which he has so much at heart.”—“Well,” answered Dolgorouki, “I will expose myself

to his anger, I will expose myself to every thing, rather than suffer a decree to be carried into execution, which is so contrary to the welfare of the empire, and the true interests of the prince.” Peter, who was quickly informed of this action of Dolgorouki’s, soon arrived in great fury, and was beginning to threaten him, when that senator, with the utmost sang froid, said to him, “Sire, it was my duty to oppose a law which you have not sufficiently considered, and the consequences of which would be the total loss of two fine provinces, already half ruined and desolated, and incapable of furnishing you with peasants equal to the performance of the task you would im-

pose upon them. Why, Sire, do you not use for that purpose the Swedish prisoners of war, of whom you have so great a number, and whom you cannot make use of for any better purpose?"

The anger of the Czar was calmed, and, making no reply to the able and intrepid senator, he profited by his counsels; and, leaving the law unexecuted, employed the Swedish prisoners to dig the canal: the greatest part of them perished in the work, and thus were preserved the lives of many useful subjects.

Dolgorouki was a man of talents and integrity, but of brutal manners, passionate, unsociable, and gloomy; one of those, in short, who cannot be seen

and known, without being at once hated and esteemed. He had rendered himself an object of personal dislike to Peter, but that monarch, in consideration of his great qualities, overlooked his defects, and could never be persuaded to dismiss him from his favour. When the affair of the canal of Ladoga was in agitation, Dolgorouki said to the Czar, “What have the peasants of Petersburg and Novogorod done, that you should treat them thus?” With this rough frankness he always spoke to his sovereign ; and that prince, with true greatness of mind, neglected the suggestions of self love whilst listening to the wise counsels of this able man.

Peter the First was too much addicted to the use of wine and other spirituous liquors, which enflaming his passions, naturally violent, rendered him at times absolutely furious and ferocious, and capable of every species of atrocity. During his childhood he was, as we have before observed, surrounded by vicious and intemperate men, foreigners as well as Russians, whom his sister, the ambitious Sophia, desirous of having the reins of government in her own hands, had placed about his person, in order to degrade and render him contemptible in the eyes of the nation : but his genius and happy disposition enabled him to triumph over all these obstacles. With

a better education, he would have learnt to repress his passions, and would never have contracted the habit of drinking. His vices were given him; we may almost say, forced upon him, but all the great qualities he displayed throughout his whole reign, his desire for the public good, his attention to justice on every occasion, all his virtues, all his talents, he received from nature, which had formed him a truly great man.

Weary of hearing continual accounts of the robberies which were committed in every part of his empire, he came one day to the senate, and ordered one of his ministers instantly to draw up, and publish a law, pur

porting that for every theft, however small, the offender should be immediately hanged. "But, Sire," said one of the senators to him, "have you sufficiently considered this law? I can assure your majesty that if your subjects are to be hanged for the least theft, you will very soon have none remaining; for, alas! Sire, we are all thieves, more or less: judge, then, if it is expedient that your order should be carried into execution?" The Czar laughed heartily at this speech; and, perceiving that he had been too precipitate, the law was not passed.

EIGHTEENTH ANECDOTE,

THE Slovo i delo*, by means of which any cruel and revengeful man, capable of bearing pain, might cause the death of another, was about to occasion the execution of a brave and honest Swedish officer in the service

* The Secret Chancery was established in 1670, by which any person accusing another, by pronouncing the words Slovo i delo, was compelled to receive three times the knout, and if after this he still persisted in his accusation, the accused was condemned to suffer death by the same punishment.

of the Czar. His servant, irritated against him, upon some account or other, accused him, by the Slovo i delo, of conspiring against the life of Peter, and having twice suffered the knout without retracting the accusation, his master was just going to be delivered into the hands of the executioner, when Peter, reflecting upon the excellent character this officer had borne, his irreproachable conduct, and the possibility of his innocence, resolved upon endeavouring to save his life, and, in concert with a priest, succeeded in drawing the truth from the informer, who confessed his guilt, acknowledged the innocence of his master, and, as a punishment for his crime, was broken

alive upon the wheel.—It is very astonishing that after such an example, Peter did not abolish the Slovo i delo, but he thought it, perhaps, a necessary check to the numerous plots which continually threatened his life; and which were occasioned by the hatred his innovations had excited.

He was once, in consequence of a mistake, placed in a very perilous situation, from which his uncommon intrepidity enabled him to extricate himself, and to crush, at the same time, by his presence alone, a formidable conspiracy. He received intelligence that two men, (with whose names he was made acquainted) at the head of a set of banditti, had engaged

in a plot against him, and had fixed upon carrying it into execution on a Friday at one o'clock, on which day the Czar was expected to dine with some of his friends at one of those country houses which were built by his orders near Petersburg. He wrote immediately to the captain of his guard, ordering him to repair, at eleven o'clock, with some troops to the house where the conspirators were accustomed to assemble, and surround it. Peter, mistaking the hour, went alone at ten o'clock to the place appointed; and, upon his approach, seeing neither captain nor soldiers, he in his own mind accused the former of great negligence, and hesitated whether

or not he should retire ; but the uncertainty of events, the mistake or possible infidelity of his officer, the peril of the moment, every thing, in short, concurred to make him resolve upon braving the danger, to which he had unwarily exposed himself. He immediately entered the house where his enemies were concealed, presented himself in the midst of them, and, after eyeing them stedfastly one after the other, took a chair, and seated himself. The astonished chiefs looked first at each other, and then at Peter, as if doubting what course they should pursue ; at length, one of them said, “ It is time ? ” His companion answered, “ No, not yet ; ” upon which

the Czar jumped up, and, seizing him by the throat, exclaimed, "If this is not the time for you, wretch, it is the time for me to make you suffer the punishment due to your crimes." In an authoritative tone*, he then ordered his companions to seize him, who instantly obeyed; and the conspirator, pale and trembling, suffered himself to be chained without resistance: the same was then done, by his command, to the other chief, after which, the rest, intimidated at his voice and manner, submitted to the same restraint, and delivered themselves up to him.

* This reminds us of Marius, in the Marsh of Minturna, when, by a look alone, he caused the soldier who came to kill him, to drop the sword out of his hand.

At eleven o'clock the captain arrived, surrounded the house, and, being informed that Peter was there, instantly hastened to him. The severe look of the Czar bespoke his displeasure, but being shown the order which he had written to the officer, and finding that he himself had forgot the hour, he acknowledged his mistake. He then delivered into the hands of the soldiers the unresisting criminals; who were taken from his presence, and almost all of them punished with death*.

* The Czar, in this action, recalls to our recollection Cæsar, when he was at the mercy of the pirates, threatening to crucify them, and afterwards keeping his word with them.

NINETEENTH ANECDOTE.

PETER's attachment and attention to foreigners, his innovations, his efforts to introduce knowledge and useful arts into the empire, his hatred for the prejudices of ignorance and barbarism, all those great qualities which challenged the gratitude and love of his subjects, served only to draw upon him animosity and hatred from all ranks of his people, and especially from the clergy. The priesthood were, as at all times, ready to de-

fend their influence and credit by assuming a regard for the interest of their religion, endangered, as they affirmed, by those innovations which threatened only the patriarchal authority. Peter, sensible that by the abuse of this authority, his projects would be constantly thwarted, upon the death of the Patriarch, resolved to leave the office vacant, and when pressed to fill it by those senators who were ignorant of his secret views and designs, he eluded their demands under various pretexts. One day, in full senate, being urged more vehemently than usual upon this subject, he got up, and striking his breast with one hand, said, pointing to himself,

“ here is your patriarch ;” then, with a menacing look, drawing with the other hand his sabre, and striking it upon the table, he added, “ and here is that which will be able to protect and defend him.” He proceeded afterwards to declare his intention of suppressing for ever the patriarchal dignity, and establishing in its stead the holy governing synod. Of this he made himself the head, and by these means obtained over the church an absolute power, which he shewed himself worthy of possessing, by employing it for the good of his people.

All the faculties of Peter were directed towards the instruction and happiness of his subjects. He was

the first sovereign of Muscovy who caused a Russian translation to be made of those foreign works which might be useful to his nation. He would not begin with books of mere entertainment, but wisely gave the preference to those which treated of mechanics, navigation, ship building, fortification, the art of war, &c.

TWENTIETH ANECDOTE.

WISHING to have the universal history of Puffendorf in his own language, he committed the translation of it to a monk, who applied himself with such diligence to the work, that he did not leave it until it was finished. In order, however, to make his court to the Czar, when he came to those parts in which the author gives an unflattering, but perhaps a faithful description of Muscovy, its inhabitants, and sovereigns, he either softened

them, or suppressed them altogether. As soon as his translation was finished he came to present it to Peter, and, placing himself in an antichamber, waited until the Czar passed, who no sooner perceived him, then he went up to him, saying, "What, have you finished already? I give you great credit for being so expeditious; let us see your manuscript." The monk humbly delivered it to him, and the Czar, after glancing his eye over it, passed to the article which treated of Russia. But he could no longer recognize the original; he saw that many facts were modified, others mutilated, and others entirely suppressed. His countenance altered,

and casting upon the monk a severe look, he called him, and returned him his book, saying, "Translate this history as I ordered you, word for word, without making any alterations whatever." By such traits as these, we discover the truly great man, superior to flattery, and worthy of hearing the truth.

TWENTY-FIRST ANECDOTE.

IN his time, there were found in Siberia some rolled manuscripts, written in a language with which no one was acquainted, although the characters were discovered to bear some resemblance to the Chinese. These being sent to Petersburgh, the Czar having no one versed in the Oriental tongues, forwarded them to Monsieur Bignon, librarian to the King of France, who put them into the hands of Monsieur Fourmont, of the academy of

inscriptions, as the person most capable of decyphering them. Monsieur Fourmont declared they were written in old Tangoutien, and, after keeping them some time, returned them with a translation, to the fidelity of which, upon his authority, due credit was given, and which, together with the originals, were sent back to Peter, and received by him with every acknowledgment. Since that time, several Russians have been sent to learn the languages of that part of Siberia which borders upon China, and a few years ago some learned men, well skilled in those tongues, reviewed the manuscripts, affirmed by Fourmont to be written in Tangoutien, and dis-

covered that the language was Mantchouriene, or that of the Mantchoux Tartars, the ancient conquerors of China. It was found that Fourmont had not understood a single word of these manuscripts, of which a faithful translation has since been given, and the originals are still to be seen in the Academy of Sciences at Petersburg.

TWENTY-SECOND ANECDOTE.

THE Sultan was far from imagining that Peter, fashioning the keel of a ship at Saardam, was preparing the instrument of the defeat of his successors, the burning of the Ottoman fleet, and the victory of Tschesmé. Of all the arts which the Czar endeavoured to transplant into his empire, those of war and navigation have flourished the most, and have been carried to a perfection, to which nothing but the valour of a warlike

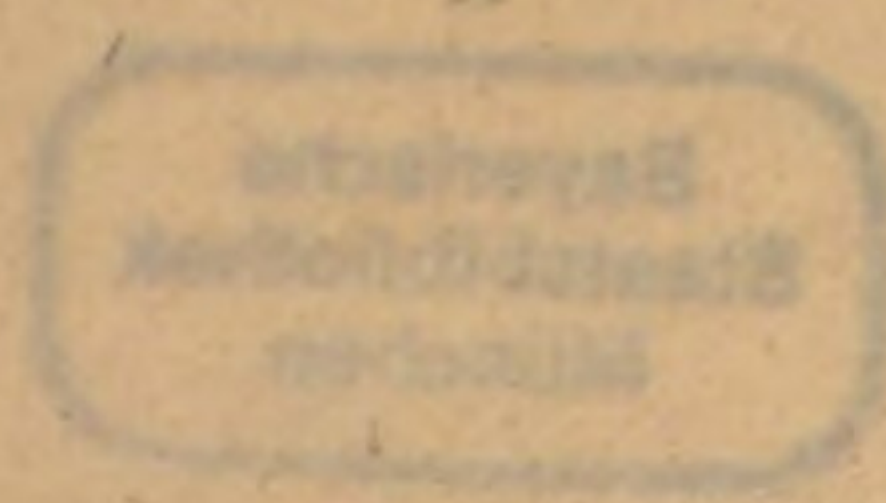
people can obtain. The Russian is now the best soldier in the world, and no forces, either naval or military, are equal to those of Russia, commanded by German or English officers: it is, indeed, to the admittance of those foreigners that their success in the seven years' war against Prussia, as well as in that with the Turks, may be altogether ascribed. Peter, notwithstanding his various attempts and travels for that purpose, did not succeed so well in transplanting into his kingdom the knowledge and arts which give lustre to more polished nations. During the regency he visited Paris, where he surveyed the academies, the various manufactures, the gobelins, the

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Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
München

library, and all the other curiosities contained in that unrivalled city. When he was at the royal mint, he was curious to see the method of coining medals, and the master-coiner being ordered to strike off one in his presence, immediately prepared his machine, the various parts of which he explained to the Czar, and, setting it in motion, soon produced several medals, one of which falling at the feet of Peter, he picked it up in order to examine it closely ; but what was his surprise at beholding on one side the impression of his own bust, and on the other a figure of fame, hovering in the air over a river, with this flattering inscription, “ *Crescit eundo !*” This



medal is preserved in the collection of Russian medals at the academy of Petersburg.

Peter had a great curiosity to see Madame de Maintenon, who was then at Saint Cyr, and who, occupied entirely in preparing for her approaching end, admitted no one into her presence. The Czar, nevertheless, though with some difficulty, was allowed to visit her, and, finding her in bed, which she scarcely ever left, seated himself at the foot of it; and, looking at her earnestly, conversed with her for a short time, in a manner at once polite, judicious, and suited to the occasion. During this interview, which did not last long, Kourakin served as his interpreter,

for Peter was acquainted with no language except his own and the Dutch.

When the Regent presented to him Louis the Fifteenth, when only seven years old, the Czar, who was six feet four inches in height, in order to see him more closely, took him up in his arms, raised him to his face, and, embracing him, said, "May your Majesty increase in happiness as in stature, and may your reign be long and prosperous; perhaps the time may come, when we shall stand in need of each other's assistance."

TWENTY-THIRD ANECDOTE.

PETER, owing to the wars he had to sustain, and his frequent journeys into foreign countries, was often obliged to be absent from his empire; and, during one of these temporary absences, Catherine occupied herself in procuring for him an agreeable surprise on his return.

Fifteen or sixteen versts south of Petersburg, at some distance from the high road, she had remarked an elevated and convenient spot, com-

manding a fine view, surrounded with cheerful objects, such as Peter liked, and well calculated for the situation of a small country-house, which she secretly caused to be constructed there ; she herself presiding at the work, designing the laying out of the gardens, and disposing every thing in such a manner as to be ready on the arrival of her husband.

Peter, always active, was, on his return to the capital, employed in superintending the different works of his new town, when Catherine told him that she had discovered near Petersburg, a delightful spot, with which he was not acquainted, and where he had never been. Peter suf-

ferred himself to be conducted by Catherine, and leaving the high road, they soon came to an eminence, where a rustic entertainment awaited them. Peter admired the beauty of the situation, and Catherine then told him she had made choice of that spot to build for him, during his absence, a house according to his taste. The Czar was pleased at the idea, and, continuing his road, soon discovered a pleasant garden, a beautiful habitation, and a crowd of people preparing eagerly to receive him, all of which a thick wood had before prevented him from seeing. He entered, and, testifying the greatest delight at all he saw, embraced her who had so

ingeniously procured him this agreeable surprise. The satisfaction of Catherine was still greater than that of the Czar; and, taking her by the hand, he conducted her to table, and they partook of a repast, which was rendered the more agreeable by the unusual gaiety of Peter, who had never appeared in such high spirits.

This is the origin of Czarko-Celo, or Sarko-Sielo, which Elizabeth has since converted into a brick castle, still in existence.

TWENTY-FOURTH ANECDOTE.

PETER was born with a violent antipathy to water and beetles, but as he wished to create a navy, and accustom a part of his people to live upon an element to which they were unused, and of which it was consequently necessary that he should not himself be afraid; his great mind enabled him to triumph over the former of these aversions, but not having as powerful a motive for overcoming the latter, it

degenerated into a weakness which he always retained.

When Peter travelled through his empire, and vivified it by his presence, he never ventured to enter the house of a peasant, but, remaining in the yard, dined and slept in his carriage, fearful that if he left it, he might encounter the object of his aversion, for beetles are very common in the villages, as every house has its oven and a supply of flour, which serves to attract these insects. Once, however, being in the yard of a house which appeared to him neat and elegant, he sent one of his attendants to enquire of the master whether there were any

beetles in it, and upon being assured to the contrary, alighted to dine. His honest host repeated to him, that he might make himself quite easy, for that he would not find a single beetle in his house, and as a proof, he added, "Look, Sire," shewing him, at the same time, one of those insects nailed to a corner of the wall, "that is the only one that has ever dared to shew himself here, and I have punished him for it, by nailing him up as you see." The Czar cast his eyes upon the animal, the sight of which made him shudder, and turning to the awkward clown, gave him several stout blows for displaying before him the object of his antipathy.

His aversion for water had not only entirely disappeared, but was converted into so great a passion for that element, that one of his greatest pleasures was to perform the office of a pilot; and to undertake himself the management of small sloops and yachts. One day he invited all the foreign ministers to accompany him by sea as far as Cronstadt, where he was anxious to inspect some new works, in which he was greatly interested, and, as a part of his fleet was about to sail from that place, he was desirous that those gentlemen should be present at the spectacle.

They embarked in a small Dutch vessel, of which Peter was the pilot:

a favourable wind gently swelled the sails, and, for the space of twenty versts, nothing could be more prosperous than their navigation, when, all at once, a violent west wind arose, and Peter perceiving at a distance a cloud which threatened a tempest, prepared, though dissembling the danger, to oppose the storm, which soon burst forth with a fury that threatened to overwhelm the vessel. The ministers, with one accord, approached the Czar, and entreated him to land them near Peterhoff, but he refused their request, and every time they renewed it, endeavoured to encourage them, by assurances that they had nothing to fear. Nevertheless the storm, ac-

accompanied with thunder and lightning, continued to encrease, and the vessel, no longer manageable, and tossed up and down by the fury of the waves, appeared every moment to be threatened with destruction; cries of distress were heard on all sides, but Peter retained his firmness and presence of mind, and continued to oppose, by his skill and science, the violence of the storm. His affrighted companions again besought him to return or land, but the Czar, always in motion, giving his orders, and attending to the management of the vessel, did not even hear them, 'till at last Monsieur de Hoos, Polish and Saxon minister, bolder, because more terrified than the

rest, approaching him, said to him in a lamentable and serious tone, "I entreat your Majesty, for the love of God, to go back to Petersburgh, or at least to land us on the nearest shore of Peterhoff, and to consider that as the king my master has not sent me to Russia to be drowned, if I should perish here, as it appears evident will be the case, your Majesty will be answerable to my court for my death."

The Czar, notwithstanding his perilous situation, could not forbear laughing at these words, and coolly answered him, "Never fear, Monsieur Van Hoos, if you die, we shall all die together, and your court will then have

nobody left to be accountable for your loss.” Peter, finding the impossibility of reaching Cronstadt, gave up all thoughts of it, and, choosing a lucky moment, landed safely, though with some difficulty, at Peterhoff. A good supper was soon gotten ready; and the party, in the intervals of their repast, which was seasoned with the best Hungary wine, did not forget, whilst laughing at their recent fears, to rally Monsieur de Hoos, so that in a short time that joy and satisfaction prevailed which a recent escape from a great danger seldoms fails to produce. The following morning, at day-break, while his companions were

still asleep, Peter set sail in his vessel for Cronstadt, from whence he sent some sloops to Peterhoff, to convey the rest of the party.

TWENTY-FIFTH ANECDOTE.

PETER the First was occupied only with the happiness of his subjects, the cares of his empire, and the glory of his nation. Simple in every thing, and endowed with that exquisite sensibility which nature bestows on so few only of her favourites, he had no taste except for simple pleasures. Fêtes and gaudy entertainments were to him insupportable. The truly great man knows nothing of those exclusive gratifications, which are the offspring

of luxury, he loves those alone which are accessible to all, and disdains that futile pomp, that vain magnificence which, supplied by extortion and supported by tyranny, terminate in the misery of the poor, and the disgust of the rich. The Czar rose at four in the morning, and was ready to receive the ministers, who came to lay before him their statements relative to the public affairs. These he examined and considered himself; gave orders, made notes, answered, or qualified any objections that were offered, and made such alterations and corrections as his clear and sound judgment prompted him to suggest. He then ate a slight breakfast, and, dressing himself, went

to the admiralty, and from thence to the senate. He dined regularly at eleven o'clock, and his favourite dishes were soup with sour or salted cabbage, gruel, cold pig soaked in sour cream, cold roast meat, seasoned with cucumbers, roast lamb, salt meat, ham, and old cheese. After dinner, he put on a dressing gown, and took a nap for two hours, after which, his ministers presented, for his examination, the report of the affairs which had been dispatched in the morning. Except in those revels and fits of intoxication, when he appeared entirely to forget himself, his usual drink was *kisleschtchi*, quass, and occasionally a little brandy : when he gave up these

liquors for wine, he preferred medoc, and after that hermitage.

In the feasts which were given at court, or in those which he gave himself to parties less numerous, he liked joy and gaiety to prevail, and as he looked upon wine as a proper stimulant for producing this effect, he was not averse to its being used rather freely, provided that decency was observed. Whenever it was in the slightest degree violated, his method was to put his guests, as well as himself into a state of such compleat intoxication, as to deprive them of all means of committing any further disorders.

TWENTY-SIXTH ANECDOTE.

HIS chief cook was a German, named John Velten, a very good servant, to whom he was extremely partial, but, as he had the best reasons, as we have before observed, for being economical of his money, he did not, in a direct manner, bestow pecuniary rewards upon Vulten, but recompensed him in a way by which he equally advanced his fortune.

He often went to his house with some of his generals and intimate

friends, and partook of a pic nic, each person paying a ducat. By which means he procured for himself the enjoyment of that freedom of conversation which is the charm of life, and requited the services of a man who was useful to him, without diminishing the treasure of the state. There was no situation, or profession, which he despised, or which he did not honour and encourage by his presence. He liked to mix with his subjects of all conditions, and allowed them to converse with him with the utmost freedom, without forgetting, at the same time, what was due to himself, for no one could more readily distinguish boldness and insolence, from

mere clownishness and want of education. As it was of importance to him to give the greatest encouragement to the navy, which he was forming in his empire, he took a particular pleasure in associating with mariners and merchants ; he liked to obtain information from them, and not unfrequently he was able to instruct them in many things himself, for his great and comprehensive mind had, at an early period, acquired clear and exact ideas upon navigation and commerce.

Coming one day to dine with one of those Petersburgh merchants, whose houses he frequented, that he might fall in the way of naval officers and sailors, he met with the commander of

a trading vessel, called Schipper, a true Dutchman, who happened to be present with some of his crew. The Czar insisted that the Captain should dine at table with him, and allowed his men to remain in the room, ordering that they should have something given them to drink, and amusing himself with their coarse and plain sea phrases. One of these sailors, emboldened by the indulgence of the monarch, in the zeal of his gratitude, took it into his head to drink to the health of the Empress. After having reflected a moment, he took the glass, bowed his head, and awkwardly scraping back his foot, said, "My Lord, Peter the Great, long live your wife, the

Empress.” At these words, the Captain turned round, looked at the sailor, shrugged his shoulders, and to shew the Czar, that for his part he was acquainted with court manners and politeness, got up, and, taking the glass, advanced towards the Emperor, and, bending his whole body, thus corrected the phrase of his sailor, “Great Peter, long live her excellency the Empress, your wife.” The Czar smiled, and replied, “Schipper, that is just the thing ; I thank you.”

TWENTY-SEVENTH ANECDOTE.

HAPPENING once to meet one of those Dutch captains, who, he knew, sometimes went to Archangel, he stopped him, and said, “Which do you like best, Archangel or Petersburg?” The mariner roughly replied, “Archangel, my Lord.” “And why?” “Because we can get good omelets there, and they give us none here.” Peter carried his indulgence and goodness so far as to invite him,

with all the other Dutch captains who were in Petersburg, to come and eat some the next day, adding that he hoped they would be as good as those of Archangel. He ordered Velten to dress this dish in every shape and fashion, and, in the garden of the summer palace, gave the seamen a grand feast, and at the same time honoured them with his presence.

Narrow-minded sovereigns are fearful of mixing with, and descending amongst their inferiors, for by such a proceeding they discover their real insignificance. But as true greatness is conscious of its dignity, and feels

that it shall lose nothing by the closest inspection, this monarch gave up his whole character to the observation of mankind, and was not himself exempt from those naïvetés which draw down the censure of fools, and are, oftener than is supposed, the characteristics of real genius.

When he was in England, where, as well as at Paris, he saw and observed every thing, he went to visit the hospital at Greenwich, and, upon his return, King William, who waited for him in his apartments, asked him how he liked what he had just seen. “Sire,” answered the Czar,

“I think you would not do amiss
in living at Greenwich, and lodging
your sailors here.”

TWENTY-EIGHTH ANECDOTE.

WHEN Peter passed through Berlin, Frederick, the first King of Prussia, was upon the throne. That Prince possessed a little vain mind; his head was turned by his newly-acquired dignity, which he enjoyed as a man does the title of count or baron, which he has just obtained. Peter formed a striking contrast with him, and never were two men more dissimilar in every thing. The Czar avoided and dreaded all pomp and display as

much as Frederick delighted in them, and by every action evinced that they were so entirely his element, that he could exist only in the midst of feasts and splendid ceremonies. When he lost his wife, whom he loved as much as a man is capable of loving, he felt at first some grief, but he was soon consoled by the idea of giving her a magnificent funeral. He considered the arrival of the Czar in his dominions a piece of good fortune, by which he hoped to have an opportunity of displaying all his splendour. As soon as Peter entered Berlin, he sent one of his attendants to inform the king of Prussia of the visit he intended to make him. Frederick immediately prepared

every thing for the Czar's reception, commanding all the court to dress in their most sumptuous apparel, and the attendants to put on their richest liveries; and recollecting that Peter had only his travelling equipage to carry him to the palace, he sent six of his most superb carriages, escorted by a number of gentlemen on horseback, to the residence of the Czar, who immediately on perceiving this splendid train, escaped by a back door, and leaving the equipages and retinue still waiting for him, walked straight to the palace, accompanied only by a servant. Frederick was much astonished to see him arrive on foot and unattended, and informed him several times of the prepa-

rations he had made for conducting him in a manner suitable to his dignity, but Peter, thanking him, told him that it was from choice he came thus, without ceremony or retinue, a declaration which excited the surprise of the king of Prussia, who was unable to comprehend the motive of such a simple proceeding.

The Czar's aversion for the trammels of luxury and etiquette, and his taste for simplicity and liberty, prompted him to get rid of the ennui and constraint of public exhibition: divesting himself of the phantom of royalty, he gave to Menzicoff, whom he had raised from nothing, the care of all those great solemnities and pompous trifles, with

which it has been thought necessary that thrones should be environed ; and even those crowds of servants, who besiege the tables of the great, and check, by their presence, all freedom of conversation, he took especial care, except on particular occasions, to dismiss.— When he dined without ceremony at home, or with some of his friends, the attendants, after placing the dishes upon the table, withdrew, and left the guests to help themselves.

No monarch more strictly displayed, even in his regal capacity, the virtues of a philosopher, and the good-nature of a person in a private station. He always looked upon labour as the most

solid basis of happiness and moral virtue, and he encouraged it by his own example, the surest method by which a sovereign can propagate what he thinks good and useful.

He once gave a moral lesson, which may be compared to that annual ceremony in China, in which the emperors, in the midst of their court, and in presence of the people, put their imperial hands to the plough, and till a certain portion of land.

Peter, in the dress of a blacksmith, worked a whole day at the forge, and by the help of a strong and muscular arm, made several iron bars, for which he received a day's wages, according to

the accustomed rate. With this sum he bought a pair of shoes, which he wore out upon his feet, and gloried in, as having been earned by the labour of his own hands.

TWENTY-NINTH ANECDOTE.

As he was travelling through a village in France, he saw in a garden, belonging to a parsonage, a man in a cassock, with a spade in his hand, digging hard at some beds of vegetables. The Czar, much pleased with this sight, alighted, and asked him who he was. "Sir," answered the man, "I am the clergyman of this village." "I took you for a gardener; why are you employed in this manner?" "The revenues of my living being but very

moderate, I do not choose to be an expense to my parishioners, but wish rather to have it in my power to assist them ; they respect me the more when they see that, to procure myself some of the conveniences of life, I improve this garden, and in this humble occupation spend as much of my time as the duties of my ministry will allow.”

“ You are an honest man,” replied the Czar, “ and I esteem you the more for thinking and acting in this manner : tell me your name.” He drew out his tablets, and wrote down the name of the worthy clergyman, and, after telling him who he himself was, and giving him many demonstrations of kindness, he took leave of him, and

returned to his carriage. When he went back to Moscow, he did not forget this scene, and endeavoured to induce the priests in his empire to imitate so virtuous an example, but whether or not he succeeded in his endeavours, is uncertain.

THIRTIETH ANECDOTE.

IN Russia, a man is estimated only according to the rank which he holds in the state, and which he must merit by rendering services to his country; and, as distinctions of every kind have a relation to military distinctions, the magistracy, the places in the administration, and all civil employments, are distinguished by the gradations of military rank. The Czar, who, as we have before observed, favoured and encouraged seamen, stopped there, and never

thought of conferring any honours upon the ship-builders, whom he had in his service. Two of these, who were Dutchmen, very skilful in their profession, and whom Peter highly valued, mortified at being nothing in the state, bethought themselves of a stratagem, by which they hoped to obtain some little rank in the community. Peter sent to speak with them, and, although he had given them permission once for all to be seated in his presence, when they appeared, they still continued standing, which the Czar did not perceive at first, but proceeded to talk to them of his affairs; at last, however, he said to them, “Well, my friends, why do you

not sit down.”—“Ah! Sire,” answered they, “we are not worthy of so great an honour; we have no rank, and no person can dare to be seated in your majesty’s presence, who is not, at least, a colonel. Peter was not the dupe of this little artifice, but he satisfied them by making one a colonel, and the other a brigadier.

THIRTY-FIRST ANECDOTE.

IN whatever light we consider the Czar, we discover in him qualities the most captivating in a sovereign; indulgence, candour, and affability, united with great penetration, and the most enlarged views.

He was desirous that Bestucheff, whom he loved and wished to employ, and in whom he had observed good talents and a worthy disposition, should be formed to the knowledge of public affairs, and charged his chancellor,

Osterman, to give him all the instructions necessary for the Swedish mission, to which he was destined. He desired him to come to him, on the day fixed for his departure, accompanied by Osterman, to receive his last orders and instructions. They went at the hour appointed, which was three in the morning, and found the Czar, already up, and waiting for them, dressed in a short bed-gown and slippers, his legs only half covered, and a cotton night-cap turned back upon his head. "Bestucheff," said he, "I have desired Osterman to initiate you into the political career, which you are about to enter, and which, with the exception of serious conjunc-

tures, which seldom occur, you will find a very simple and easy routine. It is only requisite for you to be exact in your correspondence, to be affable and polite, and to make yourself liked at Stockholm. Let us speak now of some private commissions, which it is of importance you should execute properly. You must procure me a certain number of gardeners, labourers, foresters, carpenters, masons, locksmiths, gunsmiths, and brass-founders, and take care that you make choice of proper persons:—note this down on your tablets, and upon these affairs you will always write directly to me, and give an account of them, without formality, to Peter, your master; upon

every thing relating to political affairs, you will correspond with the departments, and with Osterman.—Adieu Bestucheff.” The Czar then desired him to approach, and, kissing his forehead, dismissed him. In the simplicity of this laconic exhortation, we discover the great man, yet it has been said at Petersburg, in the midst of the very town which he founded, that Peter was nothing but a madman, and often a furious and enraged madman.

He has been reproached with cruelty, and with the habit he had contracted of distributing blows at random, to all about him, but it appears that this account has been much

exaggerated, and several of the contemporaries of Peter the First, have declared that he chastised with his cane, or his cord, only persons belonging to his household, his servants and the common people, and that he never struck any man of distinction, except Menzi-coff, whom he raised from nothing, and whom he might perhaps, for that reason, think himself at liberty to treat with less consideration. He was extremely polite to all strangers, and distinguished them each according to his rank and merit. We have before mentioned that his sister Sophia, by the bad education which she gave him, was the occasion of all his vices, yet though she had so greatly injured him,

and had even endeavoured to ruin him, he still loved her, for she had a good understanding, and talents for business, and governed very well in his absence. He has been heard to say, “If my sister would not intrigue and create disturbances in the kingdom, but love me a little, and pursue my plans, I would give up to her the administration of the interior, reserving to myself that of foreign affairs; she has a capacity which would be very useful to me, and, during my travels, she should enjoy the whole authority; I could not leave it in better hands.”

Peter felt that there were no pleasures but in private life, and that to

obtain them, it was necessary to live as much as possible like a private individual. This manner of thinking had made him contract several habits more suited to an humble than an exalted station. He was very fond of Limbourg cheese, and as all sorts of it are not equally good, when he happened to eat of one he liked, he always ordered what was left to be kept for him until the next day; but he frequently observed that in this respect very little attention was paid to his commands. One day, a delicious Limbourg cheese was brought to his table, and, resolving that this time at least he would have it reserved for him, or take his revenge for the loss of

it, he seized a moment when he was alone, and, drawing his compass out of the mathematical case, which he always carried in his pocket, measured exactly the three dimensions of what remained of the cheese, and noted them down upon his tablets. When Velten entered, the Czar said to him, “Velten, you have brought me an excellent Limbourg cheese; I never tasted a better; put it aside, and let me have it again to-morrow.” Velten bowed his head, and carried away the dish. The next day, when the desert was served up, the cheese also was put upon the table. Peter, at the first glance, thought it was much diminished since the preceding day, but being

desirous of satisfying himself upon the subject, he drew out his tablets, and, measuring the cheese with his compass, perceived that more than half of it had been taken. He called Velten, and said to him, "Did I not desire you to keep this cheese for me?" "Sire, I have not failed to do so; there it is." "You have not failed? look," shewing him his tablets; "yesterday there remained so much; I noted it down as you see; now there is not half the quantity; you are a rogue, and a cheat, and care very little about pleasing me." Having said this, the Czar got up, and, taking his cane, gave Velten a beating that was likely to render him, for the

future, more careful, or less gluttonous.

His aversion for every thing like ostentation, and his taste for liberty, induced him to live at Moscow and Petersburgh like any other individual, by which means he was better informed of every thing, observed all that was passing, conversed with people of all ranks and conditions, heard their remarks, and enjoyed all those social pleasures which are generally forbidden to the great, and especially to kings.

He went out on foot, or in a small cabriolet, with one seat, behind which was one of his *denchtchiks*, so called from two Russian words, den signify-

ing day, and chiks servant, that is to say, servants for the day. The Czar employed none but these *denchtchiks* about his person, and he made use of them for more purposes than one. When he was with his army, or travelling, they served him for cushions, especially in his afternoon naps; he slept with his head upon their knees, an office somewhat delicate and dangerous for the poor men, for Peter, sometimes impatient, and subject to anger, and not enduring that his sleep should be disturbed, treated them very roughly whenever he was awaked owing to any fault of theirs, and they were consequently always obliged to remain in the same attitude,

without stirring, the whole time they were supporting the Czar's head.

THIRTY-SECOND ANECDOTE.

PETER felt that the fate of Russia, and her future prospects either of becoming a great nation, or returning to her ancient obscurity, depended upon her possessing a port in the Baltic; it was for this reason that he valued so highly the provinces of Sivonia and Ingria, which border upon that sea. After the battle of Pultowa, he wrote thus to Bestucheff. “We are masters of the field of battle; the army of my cousin is dispersed or

destroyed; I hope, in short, that, owing to this affair, we shall retain Petersburg.”

THE Czar, having spent his whole life in acquiring arts absolutely necessary to his people, can scarcely be expected to have initiated himself into those of mere entertainment; for example, his taste for music was not very refined, though he was passionately fond of it. He could not bear French music, and had no idea of the Italian. He delighted in all noisy tunes, especially those of the strongest and loudest wind instru-

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ments, and in the sound of bells and chimes.

He began by liking the warlike instruments, the fifes and drums, which he had heard in his youth, before he had been out of his own country; afterwards, he took great pleasure in Russian airs, played upon Russian instruments, called *balabriques*, or *roschoques*, and in the *pandour*, or *bandour* airs of the Ukraine. When he went into Germany, he was delighted with the cornets and harmonious trumpets in the belfrys of the towns, but, when he became acquainted with the music of horns, bassoons, and hautbois, these alone had the power to charm him; he forgot all the rude in-

struments which had formerly pleased him, except the Dutch marine trumpets and chimes, of which he was always passionately fond.

THIRTY-FOURTH ANECDOTE.

ONE of the finest traits in the life of Peter is, that he never entertained mistresses or favourites. He was contented with what he could obtain at court without difficulty, with some of the prettiest and least scrupulous amongst the waiting women, or the maids of honour, none of whom ever possessed any influence over his mind, or drew him into any considerable expense. There is a fine saying of his recorded respecting favourites, "My

favourites,” exclaimed he, “shall always be those men who are the most honest, the most able, and the most useful to their country.”

Menzicoff was, it is true, his friend, but the Czar had as it were created him, had partly made him what he was, and was become accustomed to him, but he did not spoil him, nor fail, as we have before observed, to chastise him with blows whenever he deserved punishment. Menzicoff, like most of the Russians, was venal and rapacious; his rapines were not unknown to Peter, whom it was not easy to deceive, and who always punished him for them with his cane, and made him refund into the bargain.

It is related, amongst many other instances of the same kind, that Menzi-coff once cheated the public treasury in a delivery of corn, and by this action drew upon himself the severe displeasure of his master.

THIRTY-FIFTH ANECDOTE.

ONE of the Czar's architects, a Frenchman, named Le Blond, a very honest man, had, by some means or other, drawn upon himself the dislike of Menzicoff, who, being resolved to do him an ill turn, effected it in the following manner.

Peter was particularly attached to his gardens, which he had planted with his own hands : Menzicoff, knowing this, took advantage of his master's absence to write him word that Le

Blond, in spite of all the remonstrances he had made him, had just cut down the trees of those very gardens. This statement was at once true and false ; Le Blond had, in fact, cut them, but only the higher branches which intercepted the view. He had also topped the trees, an operation by which they are preserved. The Czar never thought of this distinction, and, not imagining that Menzicoff would convey to him so gross a falsehood, arrived in great fury at Peterhoff, where the first object he saw was Le Blond, who was coming hastily to meet him, and to whom he instantly gave a violent blow with his cane. Le Blond,

more wounded with the affront than with the blow, returned to the house, where he fell ill of a fever, which nearly cost him his life. Nevertheless the Czar hastened to examine his gardens, and seeing all the trees still standing, and simply topped, sent immediately to make his excuses to Le Blond, and being informed that he was ill, had every possible care taken of him. Upon the stairs of the castle he met Menzicoff, and reproached him with having so grossly deceived him. Menzicoff tried to excuse himself, but the Czar still persisted in charging him with the falsehood, and telling him that Le Blond was ill;

seized him by the collar, and dashed him against the wall, saying, "You alone, rascal, are the cause of his illness."

THIRTY-SIXTH ANECDOTE.

PETER died, as he had lived—like a great man. All the circumstances of his illness, and the cause of his death, shew him to be a very uncommon person. Too frequent a use of strong liquors brought on a disease in the neck of the bladder. He could not resolve to discover the seat of his disorder. This conqueror, this intrepid warrior, who had so frequently braved death at the head of

his battalions, could not surmount a false shame, and this cost him his life; for it is probable, from the great strength of his constitution, that if his disorder, which at first was trifling, had been checked in the beginning, he might have lived thirty years longer. It seems that this species of modesty is one of those amiable weaknesses which are frequently attached to great men, but the fatal effects of which the world, in other instances than the present, has had reason to deplore. If Peter had lived thirty years longer, he would have seen the revolution which he had prepared, almost completed. What good might he not

have done to the Russians! How many abuses would he not have corrected, and what useful establishments might he not then have formed! Obligated to seek some relief for his disorder, he secretly took remedies from an empiric, whom one of his valets de chambre brought to him, and who engaged, according to custom, to cure him. But in spite of these remedies, the Czar continued to grow worse, till at last, subdued by pain, he was forced to declare his complaint to Blomenstrot, his physician, who, unwilling to take upon himself a cure of such importance, sent to Moscow for Doctor Bredlow. The progress, how-

ever, of the disease, rendered ineffectual all those ordinary remedies by which an incipient inflammation would perhaps have been allayed.

He endured the most cruel sufferings; and Sir ——— Horne, an English surgeon, performed an operation, which the Czar sustained with the utmost fortitude, and which proved successful. He was relieved, and in a fair way of being perfectly cured, but unable to endure the inactivity which was necessary for his recovery, he resolved to visit the works of the canal of Ladoga, a great enterprise, conducted and directed by the Comte de Munich. From thence he went to

inspect his manufactures of arms, the salt-pits, forges, and other establishments, the offspring of his own genius and of that knowledge which he had acquired in his travels. He went by water, his favourite conveyance, and, as it was the month of October, and the weather was already severe, he suffered so much from the cold that his physician advised him to return immediately to Petersburg. He was not yet unwell, but he was threatened with a return of his complaint, which was indeed brought about by an exertion worthy of his great mind, an exertion in the cause of humanity.

As he was coming back by the

Achta, a boat near him was overturned, and, seeing the sailors in danger of being drowned, he sent some of his crew to their assistance. Finding that they were not succoured with sufficient promptitude, the generous heart of Peter was moved, and, unable to restrain his impatience, he steered his yacht to the spot, and, throwing himself into the water, flew to their assistance. His height and strength rendered him fit for a service of this nature, and he succeeded in rescuing all the sailors:—he no longer felt his disorder; nevertheless the cold and damp had seized him, and upon his arrival at Petersburg,

he had a relapse, which put an end to his life in the fifty-third year of his age.

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THE END.

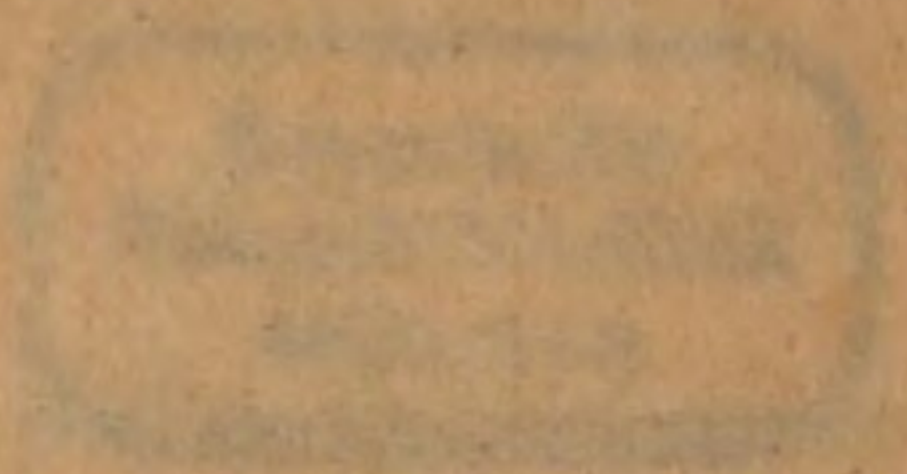
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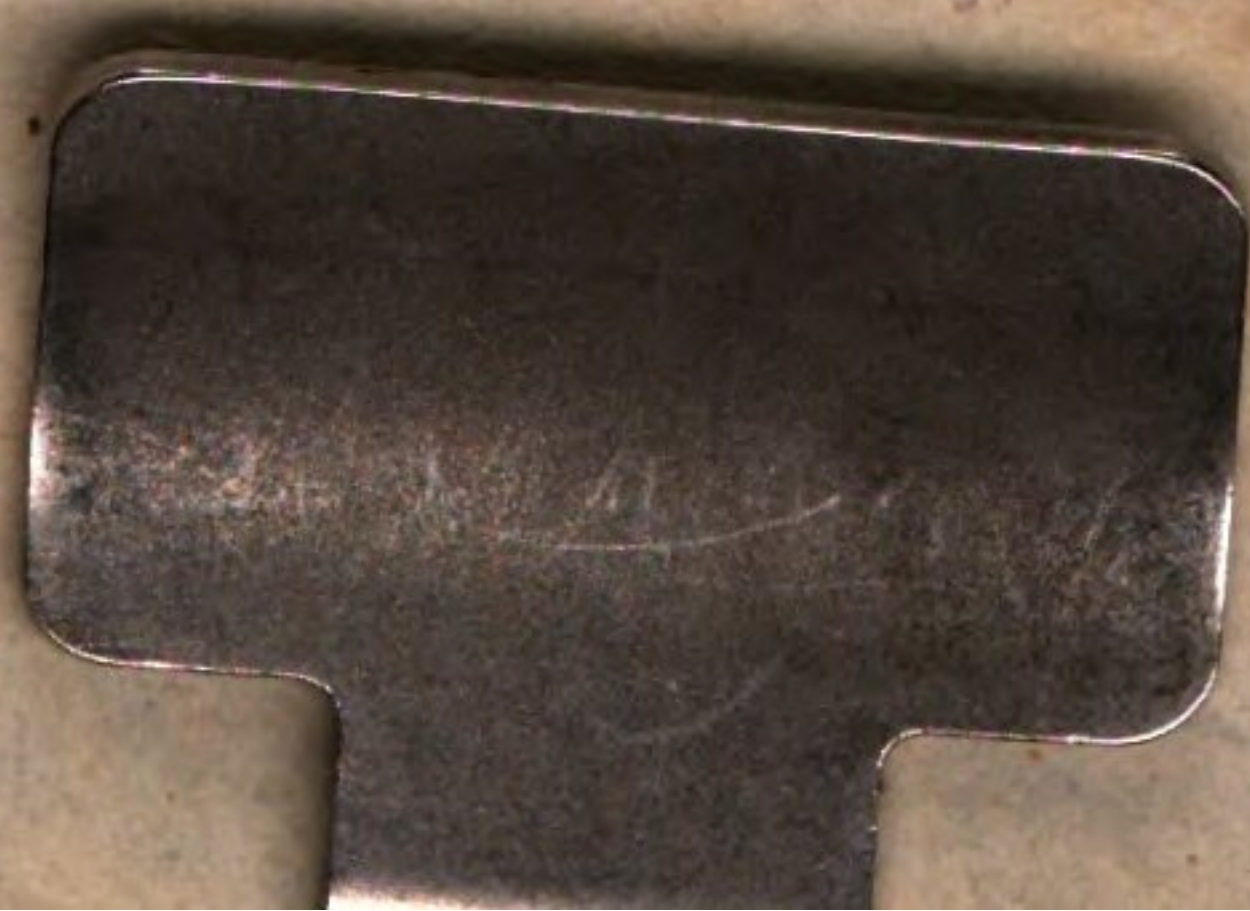
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